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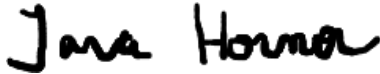
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership



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Catholic Elementary School Principals, the Transfer of Marketing Knowledge, and the
Diffusion of School Marketing

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Lisa A. Geosits

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my husband, John J. Geosits, Jr. It is your patience and analytical thinking that I try to emulate in all that I do.

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There are many who helped me along the way on this journey. I want to take a moment to thank them.

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Abstract

Despite elementary Catholic schools engaging in school marketing for some years, the level of knowledge of the school leaders and the challenges related to school marketing and the implementation of a marketing framework is not known. The researcher focused this qualitative case study on identifying the key relationship marketing performance indicators and the diffusion of school marketing that contribute to a sustainable organization after the implementation of marketing and culture change. The research questions explored the main knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing and leadership that can be used to aid the elementary Catholic school leaders to assist in the diffusion of marketing. Conceptually, this study was framed within theories of relationship marketing, transformational leadership, and diffusion of innovation. The researcher collected data through in-depth interviews, which provided detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences and created the basis for analysis. Ten participants from a diocese in Pennsylvania were selected for participation, and a series of video and transcribed interviews were conducted. The analysis included multiple passes of process coding and researcher description of notable comments. The results of this study provide insight for school leaders at all levels regarding the importance that principals' knowledge of school marketing is to the successful diffusion of the innovation. This study contributes to identifying the next steps and the development of a framework for school marketing implementation in Catholic elementary schools. It is important to study the level of knowledge of school leaders and identify the challenges related to Catholic elementary school marketing in order to ensure effective implementation of marketing concepts.

Keywords: marketing, diffusion, school, knowledge, indicators, principals

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Through its educational ministry, Catholic schools partner with parents, the primary educators of their child (Frabutt et al., 2010). Parents may choose a Catholic school education for their children because of the excellent academics imparted in the framework of Catholic teaching and practice (Frabutt, et al., 2010). In partnership with parents, Catholic schools prepare students to become active members of a church, to serve others, and to make a difference in the world (Pope Paul VI, 1965).

Catholic schools offer a value-centered education in a safe, nurturing, and faith-filled environment and are effective (Meyer, 2007). It is important to many families that their child's education is centered on what is best for the child and that the child is not just a number. However, elementary schools have always taken the “‘they will just come’ approach, and thus there has been a serious decline in enrollment” (National Catholic Educators Association [NCEA], 2018). The number of students enrolled in United States Catholic elementary schools has dropped from 2.01 million in 2000 to 1.2 million in 2019 (NCEA, 2019).

According to O’Keefe (2007), “The great strength of Catholic schools is their autonomy, the ability to craft creative responses to meet current need” (p. 55). O’Keefe (2007) further stated that the schools that respond well to the challenges of long-term sustainability “innovate, they reach out to the local community, they form partnerships” to form positive relationships (p. 55). The implementation of school advancement is a key concept in a Catholic elementary school and is an important step in keeping Catholic schools viable for years to come, according to the NCEA and Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA; NCEA, 2018). School advancement is not a new concept to education. Colleges and universities have employed this concept and mindset for years (NCEA, 2018). School advancement tells the story about the

people and the process associated with the mission of the school. The effective story reaches prospective families, donors, and community supporters and ensures that others understand the mission.

NCEA (2018) found that there is a market for Catholic schools. Parents are seeking options for quality education for their children; therefore, an opportunity exists for Catholic elementary schools to strengthen their market share (NCEA, 2018). Marketing not only affects enrollment but has additional organizational implications. Fewer students mean higher tuition costs, the quality of educational offerings will suffer, and the impact of the development of a child's strong character development will not be supported as an integral part of the mission of Catholic schools (NCEA, 2018). When marketing is not effective, the long-term sustainability of the school may be jeopardized.

Over the last 45 years, the private school landscape has changed and so have the demographics of Catholic elementary schools (Murnane et al., 2018). Historically, Catholic elementary schools have served lower- and middle-income families. With more low-income families living in the city and middle-income families moving to the suburbs, higher income families are choosing more expensive nonsectarian schools (Murnane et al., 2018). Also, the trend in a decline of U.S. birth rates will result in smaller graduating classes by 2025 (Bransberger & Michelau, 2016). These changes further indicate the need to develop a marketing strategy that includes academic excellence, affordable tuition, and the development of character in a faith-filled environment. However, with all of the positive aspects of Catholic school, it is not enough just to assume that people are going to send their children. A recent study by NCEA and FADICA (2018) found that 68% of parents surveyed chose to send their child to public school because there is no tuition cost, and it is perceived to be the best quality school in their

area. NCEA (2019) reported that Catholic schools experienced steady growth from 1920 to the mid-1960s. However, since then enrollment has wavered and seen an overall steady decline. The 2018-2019 school year brought a 2.7% decline in Catholic elementary school enrollment. Overall, the national enrollment decline since 2009 has demonstrated a 18.4% loss of student population (NCEA, 2019). What can be done to ensure the long-term sustainability of Catholic elementary schools?

As stated by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE, 2015), school advancement is about leadership and understanding the organization. Understanding the organization aids in telling the school's story about mission, which includes the development of the whole person—mind, body, and soul. The organizational change that occurs when implementing school advancement affects how we think about the students, the families, and our role as frontline marketing agents. The organizational change that occurs when implementing school advancement may create friction within the organization. The implementation of school advancement in Catholic elementary schools requires staff members to embrace the concept of marketing. Some staff members do not understand the need for the change or may refuse to change and be an agent for long-term sustainability. Thus, having the right leadership skills to successfully diffuse the school advancement in a Catholic elementary school are critical.

Mission statements, once considered to be for business only, have become a way for Catholic schools to provide focus to the culture of the organization. Mission statements define the culture of the school and provide the basis for all who work or attend school there. Catholic school culture is described as the totality of the school's belief system and patterns of behavior. Cook (2013) stated that:

Catholic school culture is . . . a “way of life” rooted in Christ, a Gospel-based creed and code, and a Catholic vision that provides inspiration and identity. This Catholic vision is shaped over time and is passed from one generation to the next through devices that capture and stimulate the Catholic imagination, such as symbols and traditions (p. 136).

Organizational change has been found to be a “change in cognitive, affective, and behavior components, the affective aspects are frequently overlooked” (Piderit, 2000). Frijda (1988) and Lazarus (1991) stated that emotions are a direct response to events, issues, relationships, and objects that are important to people. Organizational change can affect positive and negative emotions for the staff (Smollan & Sayers, 2009). The affective culture also needs to be recognized as it may also lead to negative and positive responses to the culture change (Smollan & Sayers, 2009). Previous research by Amos and Weathington (2008) and Goodman and Svyantek (1999) has demonstrated that commitment and job satisfaction increase with those employees who share similar values with the organization and decrease when the values are not similar.

Previous research by Hobbie (2009) concluded that school staff who identified with the mission of the school and believed that the principal supported the school’s mission maintained positive relationships and were motivated to advance all aspects of the school. Hobbie (2009) further found that principals who had positive relationships with their staff experienced a staff that adapted to change and felt included in the organizational process. This positive relationship increased the supporting financial resources for leaders of Catholic schools and linked school identity to sustaining the school (Hobbie, 2009).

While recognizing the challenges that face Catholic schools, it is important at the diocesan and parish level that Catholic education is valued, supported, and promoted as an

integral part of the Church's ministry. The future of Catholic school education depends on the entire Catholic community embracing the concept of stewardship of time, talent, and treasure, and translating stewardship into concrete action. Given the value of Catholic education and to reverse the decline in enrollment, the bishop of the diocese, where the elementary schools in this study were located, established the Bishop's Commission of Catholic Schools (BCCS) to initiate and implement best practices in enrollment management, development, and marketing in Catholic elementary schools within the diocese.

Research has suggested that school culture is the personality of the organization, and leaders reflect this culture (Deenmamode, 2018). Previous research has also suggested that a leader's attitude can affect school vitality (Baltaci, 2017; Hobbie, 2009) and the leader's attitude can have a positive or negative affect. School identity is also critical to understanding the school's culture and the positive promotion of the school's mission. Hagan and Houchens (2016) indicated that Catholic identity is foundational to the mission of the school and is coupled with academic excellence. Specific research regarding organizational culture and leadership in school advancement in elementary Catholic schools is limited. The success of any Catholic school will depend on the school leader's ability to capture the school community's Catholic vision and to engage other people in the building process of the kingdom through the diffusion of the innovation of Catholic elementary school marketing.

Marketing has recently emerged as an organizational topic for schools due to the increased competition among public, charter, magnet, and other specialized schools (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2007; Poole, 2017). Research in educational marketing has consistently focused on school marketing activities such as open houses and recruitment events rather than the understanding of how to apply marketing strategies to help achieve educational goals, such as

brand consistent messaging and digital advertising (Poole, 2017). School marketing activities include print and electronic materials, donor events, and events that engage prospective families, such as an open house. In contrast, the application of marketing strategies includes relationship marketing, marketing terms, and a marketing framework. The implementation of marketing initiatives in Catholic schools has become a top priority because of the 27.5% decline in enrollment as stated in the NCEA's 2017-2018 report (NCEA, 2018). Further research by the NCEA (2018) indicates that a viable market does exist for Catholic schools (p. 37). However, Catholic schools need to develop proactive, targeted marketing strategies that communicate the strengths of the schools and identify the mission.

Researchers studying school marketing in Catholic elementary schools have found a relationship between the principals' marketing knowledge and the effectiveness of marketing in the schools (Poole, 2017). Poole (2017) defined marketing knowledge as a combination of an understanding of general marketing principles and the application of these principles in the organization. Researchers have also identified relationship marketing, supported by market orientation, as a successful framework for enrollment stability and growth (Arnett et al., 2003; Poole, 2017). Koziol et al. (2014) stated that relationship marketing is essential to the development and diffusion of the educational marketing innovation; therefore, long-term value exists by cultivating strong relationships with all those involved in promoting the mission of the school. However, little is known about the transfer of marketing knowledge to the principal and identification of critical success factors in marketing Catholic elementary schools. If education marketing serves a critical role for the long-term sustainability of Catholic elementary schools, school principals lack specialized marketing knowledge; and if relationship marketing is a successful framework, then more needs to be known about the combined effects of relationship

marketing and marketing knowledge on the diffusion of marketing within Catholic elementary schools.

School leaders need the information gained from this research in order for them to determine avenues to better understand marketing concepts and tools to ensure successful implementation of marketing concepts (Poole, 2017). The specific problem is that the level of knowledge of the school leaders and the challenges related to school marketing and the implementation of a marketing framework is not known. This information is needed in order to identify the next steps and develop a framework for school marketing implementation in Catholic elementary schools. It is important to study the level of knowledge of school leaders and identify the challenges related to Catholic elementary school marketing in order to ensure effective implementation of marketing concepts.

This research topic is important to the success of Catholic elementary schools. Steps must be taken to ensure that the implementation of school advancement is successful and sustainable. It is vital for Catholic school leaders to understand the organizational culture conflicts that exist with school advancement. The information gathered will contribute to the knowledge base of the impact of organizational culture, values, and leadership on Catholic elementary school advancement efforts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to focus on elementary Catholic school principals and conduct a study to identify the relationship marketing key performance indicators and the diffusion of school marketing. Based on my experience and observation, as well as research literature, in this study I identify the level of relationship marketing knowledge of the school leaders and the challenges related to school marketing. This information is needed in order to

identify the next steps and develop a framework for school marketing implementation in Catholic elementary schools. In addition, these research findings will give a better understanding of the impact of the transfer of knowledge and the success of school advancement with those organizations that are implementing school advancement.

I employed a case study, qualitative research process to identify the relationship marketing key performance indicators and the diffusion of school marketing that contribute to a sustainable organization after the implementation of marketing and culture change. The research method for this study consisted of in-depth interviews of Catholic elementary school principals in a diocese in Pennsylvania that educates approximately 10,000 students. The in-depth interview process allowed for the examination of the perspectives of elementary Catholic school principals, some of whom had already instituted school advancement and were about to embark on the organizational change of implementing school marketing to promote the mission of the school and ensure long-term sustainability.

Research Questions

RQ1. What is the level of marketing knowledge of Catholic school leaders and the challenges experienced in school marketing?

RQ1a. What relationship marketing key performance indicators in the transfer of marketing knowledge occurred for the elementary Catholic school leader?

RQ2. What are the main knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing and leadership that can be used to aid the elementary Catholic school leaders to assist in the diffusion of marketing?

RQ3. What are the most significant factors that influence the diffusion of marketing in elementary Catholic schools?

Definition of Key Terms

Diffusion of innovation. A theory that groups of people differ in their willingness to adopt a new product or idea. Therefore, the innovation moves through the organization in a pattern of adoption (Gouws & Rheede van Oudtshoorn., 2011).

Marketing knowledge. A combination of an understanding of general marketing principles and the application of these principles in the organization (Poole, 2017).

Organizational culture. An enduring, slow-changing core attribute of organizations. It also refers to implicit aspects of the organization and core values and consensual interpretations about how things are (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

Organizational values. Indicators of what people value about an organization's performance. The values define what is seen as good and right and appropriate (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

Transfer of knowledge. A diffusion of knowledge, ideas, and experience that move from the source of the knowledge to the recipient of that knowledge, either within or outside the organization (Argot & Ingram, 2000).

Summary and Preview of the Next Chapter

As the primary school leader, the principals' understanding of marketing knowledge transfer is critical to elementary Catholic schools' sustainability. As elementary Catholic school marketing becomes a part of more schools, research around marketing key performance indicators will assist the school with developing market orientation practices that lead to the success of the school. While recognizing the challenges that face Catholic schools, it is important, at the diocesan and parish level, that Catholic education is valued, supported, and

promoted as an integral part of the Church's ministry. The following literature review presents a critical analysis and synthesis of the research through concepts and trends.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The implementation of marketing initiatives has become a top priority in Catholic schools because of the increase in options for educating children. Given the number of charter schools, private schools, public schools, virtual schools, and religious schools, parents now have many options for educating their children. Still, Catholic schools only have a limited pool of children. This dilemma emphasizes the need for schools to invest in marketing strategies to maintain viability. These marketing strategies range from social media and print campaigns to sophisticated utilization of customer relationship management techniques and digital predictive analytics (James & Phillips, 1995). Poole (2017) has found a relationship between the marketing knowledge of school leaders and the effectiveness of marketing in schools. The transfer of marketing knowledge and the identification of critical success factors in Catholic elementary schools requires further research. In this study, I sought to identify the key relationship marketing performance indicators and the diffusion of school marketing.

Literature Search Methods

The literature search strategy utilized for this literature review included the use of the online library resources of Abilene Christian University and the Google Scholar search engine. The resources I utilized were peer-reviewed, scholarly research articles mainly dated between 1995–2019. The keywords used to conduct the search included *transfer of knowledge*, *Catholic*, *elementary school*, *diffusion of innovation*, *marketing*, *enrollment management*, *strategic enrollment management*, and *enrollment competition and marketing*.

Theoretical Framework Discussion

Relationship marketing and the diffusion of an innovation provide a framework for the school leader to build upon and define the school's current culture. The diffusion process

primarily focuses on the noneconomic factors associated with the decision-making process and is directly aligned with branding (Gouws & Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2011). Relationship marketing has a two-fold meaning for organizations to gain new customers and to retain customers in order to benefit all those engaged with the organization and build a long-term relationship (Yang & Robson, 2012).

Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing emphasizes nurturing relationships with existing families and the development of supportive market networks (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2003). Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown (2007) have found that relationship marketing puts an emphasis on nurturing relationships, especially with existing customers, and the development of a supportive market network. Also emphasized is the leader's commitment to market orientation and a customer-driven organizational culture.

Kozioł et al.'s (2014) research focused on presenting the relationships between the company's method for acquiring knowledge from external sources and the innovation implementation process. The authors indicated that customer relations management and relationship marketing are considered the modern approach to the diffusion of innovation and are based on long-term relationships. Also indicated is the belief that customer participation in the innovation is significant. This source of knowledge is then used for further innovation development. The authors discussed business and service marketing concepts and the limited research of educational marketing. Also indicated is that prior research specifies that customers are looking to build a relationship. The use of relationship marketing may give a competitive advantage to a school because of the acknowledgement of and response to the customer needs.

Effect of Innovations

Glor (2014) identified a way to develop a framework that would determine the impact of innovations on their organizations. Glor (2014) pointed to the need of a framework to explore the effect of innovations on an organization, population, and community. Glor (2014) also indicated that the most valuable research for achieving an understanding of the impact of an innovation would be the numerous comparisons of related case studies, effects on people, the factors correlating with the long-term sustainability of the organization, and the impact of the innovation on organizational demographics.

Diffusion of Innovation

Gouws and Rheede van Oudtshoorn (2011) applied the theory of diffusion of innovation to contemporary issues, such as school marketing, which may be described as a high-involvement product. High-involvement products may depict a consumer's image and be considered an extension of oneself, thus the consumer identifies with the brand (Gouws et al., 2011). Holt's (2004) theory on the relation of brand loyalty to the stakeholders relies on the diffusion of innovation's principles of adoption and the elements of diffusion. Society constantly evolves and so must the brand. The brand of a product or organization signifies the stability, comfort, and satisfaction of the adopter. Opinion leaders play a prominent role in the cumulative rate of adoption. The opinion leader is defined by Rogers (2003) as the person who influences other attitudes or overt behavior informally in a desired way with frequency. Diffusion is concerned with the noneconomic factors that influence an individual to make a decision.

Gouws and Rheede van Oudtshoorn (2011) analyzed the diffusion of innovation theory and market branding principles. The purpose was to realize an increase in the number of adopters and predict the continued development of the diffusion that is in progress. Timely

communication is an important component of proactive branding. The authors also stated that “diffusion is essentially concerned with the noneconomic factors that influence an individual to make a decision” (Gouws & Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2011, p. 241).

Rogers (2003) described an organizational change framework that can work effectively with the diffusion of school marketing. Rogers (2003) originally utilized diffusion to investigate the adoption of technology in education. Technology is a design for instrumental action that reduces the uncertainty of the cause-and-effect relationship of the desired outcome (Rogers, 2003, p. 14). Rogers (2003) defined adoption as a decision of the full use of an innovation as the best course of action available.

The four main elements in the diffusion of innovations theory are innovation, communication channels, time, and social system. The innovation-decision process also includes the following five steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Rogers (2003) argued that innovations that offer more relative advantage, compatibility, simplicity, trialability, and observability will be adopted faster. Rogers (2003) also stated that all of these factors influence faculty members’ likelihood of adopting a new technology. The adopter categories are defined as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers, 2003). Rogers (2003) also indicated that leaders who follow the adopter categories achieve a successful adoption of the innovations.

Problem formulation, solution development, and alignment with identity involve a higher degree of uncertainty in the diffusion of school marketing (Seelos & Mair, 2016). “Innovation is a process and scaling, delivering effective products and services to more people reliably, efficiently, and with a steady improvement in quality” (Seelos & Mair, 2016, p. 29). Therefore, innovation plus scaling equals impact. Seelos and Mair (2016) have determined a set of six ways

that organizations limit productive innovation. These include never getting started, pursuing too many bad ideas, stopping too early, stopping too late, scaling too little, and innovating again too soon. The innovation framework may be used as a diagnostic tool to examine why an innovation has limited diffusion.

Leadership Strategy

Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. Northouse (2016) stated that transformational leadership incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership and moves followers to accomplish more than what is expected of them. Transformational leadership is the process by which a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2016).

Boga and Ensari (2009) stated that there are four elements that characterize transformational leadership: charisma, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspiration/motivation. Transformational leaders aim to broaden and elevate the interests of followers, generate awareness and acceptance among the followers for the purpose of organizational mission, and motivate followers to go beyond their self-interests (Boga & Ensari, 2009). The remaining transformational leadership factors (inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) demonstrate to the school team the new principal's encouragement of open, effective communication, interest in new approaches and innovative ways to improve situations, and the fostering of a supportive culture and active listening skills (Boga & Ensari, 2009).

The process of organizational change is convoluted and surrounded by apprehension toward unanticipated outcomes, obstacles, and setbacks, which are exhibited in the employee's behavior through aversion to change (Boga & Ensari, 2009). As predicted in Boga and Ensari's

(2009) research, an organization undergoing organizational change is perceived as more successful when managed by a transformational leader. Their findings indicated that transformational leadership predicts the perception of superior organizational success.

Transformational Leadership Strategies and Organizational Change

Transformational leadership strategies are necessary to positively affect organizational change. Transformational leadership behaviors can influence employees' reactions to change through various avenues. The participants in this study are leaders of organizations rather than leaders in organizations. Wang et al. (2016) have also examined the role of a leaders' personal attributes and transformational leadership behaviors to explain employees' resistance to organizational change. Researchers also found that situational factors may interact with personal factors in forming attitudes toward change.

Literature Review

Anast-May et al. (2012) indicated that schools operate in an increasingly competitive environment because families have more educational choices. This competitive marketplace makes it increasingly important for principals of all schools to increase their marketing knowledge and implement marketing concepts. With the increase of school choice options, school leaders are experiencing a greater need to implement marketing strategies to remain competitive. Oplatka (2007) further suggested that prior research indicates that school leaders do not possess marketing ideology, research, strategies, or plans (p. 209). School leaders understand that schools are dependent on maintaining capacity, however a lack of knowledge exists. Sferle et al. (2012) indicated that teachers are often opposed to marketing techniques and view it as an intrusion on their professional role. Sferle et al. (2012) also pointed out that schools have been involved in marketing because each school manages a reputation.

Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown (2012) have sought to expand the understanding of educational marketing practice in schools, by documenting the ways in which elementary (primary) and secondary schools implement their marketing strategies (p. 376). The components of their research problem include the omission of research regarding the impact of market forces upon implementation of marketing in the school (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012). Schools began to use basic marketing principles; however, research did not follow regarding the impact of the implementation on school processes or culture (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012).

James and Phillips (1995) indicated that research in educational marketing focuses on strategies, ideas, and suggestions. The range of recipients or stakeholders, defined as the students, parents, donors, community members, that the school serves is also indicated as a complicating factor of educational marketing (Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1993). Development of a marketing mix that engages each group of stakeholders is a key component in educational marketing (James & Phillips, 1995). Educational marketing is considered an important aspect of educational leadership. James and Phillips (1995) indicated that research exists using traditional business models; however, there is a need for education specific marketing strategies. The lack of education specific strategies is possibly indicative of the piecemeal approach that school leaders utilize when implementing marketing strategies. School leaders operate in an environment that is changing at a rapid pace and are not educated in marketing.

“Like many other ‘professional services,’ education has tended to eschew marketing (Mazzarol et al., 2000). Despite this neglect, education remains a service capable of treatment as any other in terms of marketing theory. In doing this, an important starting point is the classification of education as a marketable service” (Mazzarol et al., 2000, p. 41). The components of the problem of school marketing implementation include the identification of

education as a marketable service and the introduction of a conceptual foundation. Lovelock (1983) and Mazzarol et al. (2000) purported that by utilizing this theoretical framework, it is possible to describe education services in school marketing terms. The framework identifies five criteria, examined in four dimensions that are relevant to school marketing. The criteria include the nature of the service act, the relationship with the customer, the level of customization and judgement in services delivery, the nature of demand relative to supply, and the method of service delivery (Mazzarol et al., 2000). Utilization of this framework identifies the marketing mix and is key to identifying where the school is to where the school wants to be (James & Phillips, 1995).

Poole and Campos (2017) indicated that research is lacking in the transfer of marketing knowledge in Catholic primary schools and “organizational learning involves intentional and unintentional methods to increase the effectiveness and retention of organizational knowledge” (p. 2). By understanding transfer of marketing knowledge concepts, school leaders can identify a plan for advancing marketing strategies in their school. With the decline in enrollment, primary Catholic schools have implemented marketing. Little academic research exists regarding marketing educational organizations (James & Phillips, 1995; Poole & Campos, 2017). Poole and Campos (2017) further stated that the existing research focuses on documenting school marketing activities and does not address how school leaders determined those were the best activities for their school.

Increasing a school leader’s marketing knowledge and implementation of school marketing tactics creates an organizational change. This organizational change affects the organizational culture and the challenge of finding a balance between the current organizational culture and the change in organizational culture of the school as a business. Catholic school

leaders are cultural architects who must consciously, intentionally, deliberately, and systematically attend to the religious culture of their schools (Cook, 1998). The four cited building blocks of cultural architecture are core values, language, symbols, and traditions (Cook, 1998). Catholic school leaders as cultural architects have the challenge and opportunity to intentionally connect school vocabulary and language forms to the mission of the school. However, Bossing (2016) finds that school leaders as change agents have focused on the academic processes in the school and not the business side of school management.

According to Hobbie et al. (2010), the melding of individual culture with organizational culture is evidenced by the spiritual component of the Catholic school culture. Catholic schools enroll students of all faiths. It is not the specific religion that binds the organization together; it is the belief system inherent in every religion. A Catholic school's culture is very important in the faith development of students (Hobbie et al., 2010).

Religion involves human persons reaching out to God to give meaning to the most fundamental questions that they face (Cook, 1998). Culture, on the other hand, consists of the shared values and behaviors that bond a community together (the form of culture) in response to its search for meaning. Organizational culture is described as a component of a person's individual culture (Cook, 1998). The leadership of any organization needs to determine and mold those symbols that have meaning to the individuals in the organization in order to have a productive culture. The symbols of a Catholic school are strong academics, good handwriting, and a good sense of moral values.

Every Catholic school, indeed, every organization or social group, such as a family, has its own unique culture or spirit. However fragmented and poorly articulated, the culture of a Catholic school has a far-reaching influence on students, staff and parents and, in a real sense, is

the Christian message as experienced by the school community. In relation to Catholic schools, the specific understanding of the culture of a Catholic school expresses the core beliefs, values, traditions, symbols and patterns of behavior which provide meaning to the school community and which help to shape the lives of students, teachers and parents (Cook, 1998).

The understanding of organizational change and the leadership skills necessary to effect the change are so important to the world at large. Pope Francis evidences this in his desire to change the way the Vatican deals with issues and the way in which we approach everyday life. The institution of the concept of school marketing in elementary schools is critical to their sustainability.

School marketing is an innovation that is designed to invoke a reaction from parents that decreases the concern for the sustainability of the organization by maintaining enrollment. Rogers's (2003) organizational change theory of diffusion of innovations originally utilized to investigate the adoption of technology in education, indicated that the words technology and innovation are used synonymously. "Technology is a design for instrumental action that reduces the uncertainty of the cause and effect relationship of the desired outcome" (Rogers, 2003, p. 14). Rogers (2003) defined adoption as a decision of full use of an innovation at the best course of action available. There are four main elements in the diffusion of innovations. They are innovation, communication channels, time, and social system (Rogers, 2003).

The innovation-decision process includes the following five steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Rogers, 2003). Sahin (2006) stated that Rogers (2003) argued that innovations that offer more relative advantage, compatibility, simplicity, trialability, and observability will be adopted faster. Sahin (2006) also stated that all of these factors influence faculty members' likelihood of adopting a new technology. Adopter

categories are also defined as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. The adopter categories are followed for successful innovations.

The innovation pathologies framework may be used as a diagnostic tool to examine why an innovation had limited diffusion. Three aspects of the innovation process that involve a higher degree of uncertainty include problem formulation, solution development, and alignment with identity (Seelos & Mair, 2016). “Innovation is a process and scaling, delivering effective products and services to more people reliably, efficiently, and with a steady improvement in quality” (Seelos & Mair, 2016, p. 29). Therefore, innovation plus scaling equals impact. Seelos and Mair (2016) have determined a set of six ways that organizations limit productive innovation. These include never getting started, pursuing too many bad ideas, stopping too early, stopping too late, scaling too little, and innovating again too soon.

Principals who are change agents are defined as leaders who improve development processes and manage change in response to reactions to work improvements. These same change agents foster a school culture with a focus on learning in order to enable effective teaching.

Kozioł et al. (2014) indicated that customer relations management and relationship marketing are considered the modern approach to diffusion of innovation and is based on long-term relationships. Also indicated is the belief that customer participation in the innovation is significant to the diffusion process. This source of knowledge gained from the relationship built with the customer is then used for further innovation development.

Marketing Knowledge Definition

Most prior research regarding school marketing is centered on market structures and implications for teaching and learning (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2003). A school marketing

perspective encourages schools to follow four major stages (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2003). The first is marketing research and analysis of the environment. The second is the formulation of a marketing plan and strategy followed by implementation of the marketing mix. Finally, there is an evaluation of the marketing process. The implementation of these strategies requires a principal to have related knowledge and skills. The question remains as to whether or not the transfer of marketing knowledge to the elementary Catholic school principal exists.

Prior research has indicated that in most schools, the principal is the person primarily responsible for school marketing; however, all persons in the school are also expected to be engaged in school marketing activities (James & Phillips, 1995). Much of the prior research is wedded in the marketing models for noneducational settings (James & Phillips, 1995). Educational marketing does raise a variety of ethical issues that are peculiar to altruistic institutions reliant on clientele for their very existence (Kerby, 2013).

Andreasen et al. (2005) stated, "Because cultural differences may slow the adoption of marketing concepts and tools, they require superior management in the nonprofit sector" (p. 52). Empirical research is clearly needed to discover how the organizational differences between private sector and nonprofit organizations might affect the marketing tools used and their depth of use. Most marketing research has been conducted and is applicable to the for-profit sector. However, with the changing nonprofit culture, an understanding of marketing approaches and strategies is being defined. The implementation of for-profit strategies may seem like a simple solution. However, the nonprofit organization does not readily embrace the concept of marketing due to the fears associated with implementing something new (Andreasen et al., 2005). Andreasen et al. (2005) indicated that the evidence of the problem is supported by past research that indicates the importance of market knowledge. In addition, there is difference in nonprofit

and for-profit cultures and the different marketing challenges each face (Andreasen et al., 2005). The transfer of marketing knowledge is important so that the nonprofit does not limit risk-taking.

Sferle et al. (2012) have also identified that school leaders and staff have a lack of knowledge of marketing concepts, techniques, and methods. Prior research indicated that teachers have often been opposed to marketing techniques, such as customer service, donor relations, and brand recognition, and view it as an intrusion on their professional role. Another key concept is that schools have been involved in marketing for many years because each school manages a reputation (Sferle et al., 2012).

A change in expectations and culture ensues after the inclusion of marketing in a school environment (Hobbie et al., 2010). School vitality enables a Catholic elementary school to fulfill its educational mission despite difficult circumstances (Hobbie et al., 2010). This type of environment fosters the belief that the staff has the ability to plan and implement in order to sustain effectiveness as a plan for long-term sustainability in a supportive environment for adaptation to the changing situation (Hobbie et al., 2010).

According to Hobbie et al. (2010), an important outcome of school vitality is that Catholic school identity is related to the four factors used to measure organizational leadership. These factors are principal mindfulness, institutional integrity, collegial leadership, and resource influence (Hobbie et al., 2010). Furthermore, the researchers found that the association between the ability of a principal to obtain resources and the demonstration of Catholic norms references the Church's directives for principals to be stewards (Hobbie et al., 2010). School vitality also fosters Catholic rational thinking and demonstrates an openness to new information. Principals who obtain and utilize school resources effectively are associated with the following tenets of school vitality: positive involvement, studious environment, and faculty competency. Hobbie et

al. (2010) also determined that Catholic school identity is an important predictor of school vitality.

Not only does school identity affect school vitality, but as Norbom and Lopez (2016) have discovered, the two bases of social power—information and connection power—also have an effect. French and Raven (1959) have identified seven bases of power: expert, connection, reward, referent, legitimate, and coercive. Norbom and Lopez (2016) furthered the understanding of how informal sources of power influence innovations and found that innovative culture is the highest when the organization is perceived to be less bureaucratic. A culture that fosters an innovative environment is led by individuals who exhibit knowledge, have important and useful connections, and are supportive and foster inclusion (Norbom & Lopez, 2016).

Challenges of Recruiting for Private Schools

Private schools face challenges in recruiting students. One of these challenges is a staff perspective that school marketing is not necessary. School marketing is seen as a vital function for long-term sustainability and yet is not compatible in the education field due to principals and teachers claiming that education cannot be marketed like other business services or products (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2003). As described by Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown (2003), educators relate marketing strategies to selling, shopping around, and the utilization of marketing phrases to communicate academic achievements. This is counterintuitive for educators as their professional development has taught them to focus on the student, not the organization.

Meyer (2007) indicated that a common phrase of Catholic educators is that “the world has changed” (p. 18). The cause for this change includes the sex-abuse scandal, the movement of families to the suburbs where they experience that public schools are better than expected, and

school choice. Given this information, Catholic schools need to become expert fundraisers, marketers, promoters, lobbyists, and miracle workers (Meyer, 2007).

The NCEA (2018) report found that the greatest barrier to increasing enrollment at Catholic schools is parents' concerns about the product, as well as a lack of confidence they can afford the cost of tuition (p. 29). To mitigate the cost of tuition, some states offer tuition assistance programs, such as vouchers and tax credits. The issue is that parents claim they are not aware of the various programs. The research further reveals that there is a measurable relationship between those who feel confident they can afford a Catholic school and their willingness to consider it for their child (NCEA, 2018)

The key findings of the NCEA (2018) research indicated that parental satisfaction with public schools is lacking and parents are more empowered to seek and find an education that meets the needs of their child. This is due to the many available educational settings. The researchers also indicated that parents report an unfamiliarity with the Catholic school system to make an informed decision as to whether or not to pursue this style of education for their children (NCEA, 2018). The lack of proactive marketing communication fuels speculation and misperceptions about the mission and success of Catholic schools. This lack of communication has deterred families from considering Catholic education (NCEA, 2018). The data from the NCEA (2018) research also indicated that parents perceive that academic rigor and diversity in the classroom is deficient and religious instruction is predominant. Another challenge that Catholic school principals need to overcome is the perception that Catholic schools have not evolved at the same pace as public schools; therefore, the education is not as in-depth. Physical barriers, such as transportation and the reputation of the school (Kerby, 2013), are also challenges that need to be overcome.

Proactive, targeted communications that bridge the knowledge and perception gap is a recommendation from the NCEA (2018) to combat the challenges of Catholic schools. As a form of communication, promotion can be used to inform the parents and persuade them to choose the service that is being offered (James & Phillips, 1995). Proactive, targeted communication is accomplished by identifying the key features which appeal to the market and is a tool that most people understand and interact with on a daily basis. Effective, proactive communication can attract attention, arouse interest, create desire, and prompt action of those in the target market to overcome challenges. Promotional tools are forms of communication that include advertising, public relations, and outreach and are also effective in overcoming the challenges facing the perception gap of parents (NCEA, 2018).

In James and Phillips's (1995) research, they found that all of their interviewees, who were principals, believed that they were committed to promoting their school and practiced effective communication. None of the principals interviewed utilized any type of systematic evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the communication (James & Phillips, 1995). The other issue that was discovered is that the principals could not articulate any knowledge of the elements of communication practices.

James and Phillips (1995) found a lack of coherent marketing practice in the schools studied despite the fact that they were chosen because of their competitive environment. The researchers further stated that an argument can be made that none of those interviewed had received any management training in educational marketing. The implementation of school marketing is not simply adoption of an approach, but a change in mindset that sees all activities in terms of customer's requirements (Kerby, 2013). Simply seen as an add-on to current practice, principals do not engage in a mindset that promotes the successful implementation of school

marketing. Principals also do not base financial decisions on reliable and systematic marketing research findings (Kerby, 2013).

The benefits of school marketing include a better accomplishment of the institutions' mission, increased satisfaction of employees and pupils, the ability to attract more financial and nonfinancial resources, and the increased efficiency of marketing actions (Stachowski, 2011). School marketing also builds trust, loyalty, and credibility with parents, which directly translates to increased student retention and long-term sustainability (Stachowski, 2011).

Principal's Professional Preparation and Recruiting Responsibility

The role of the principal has evolved from routine to more complex in the 21st century. Arhipova et al. (2018) purported that principals should develop and use a democratic and communicative form of leadership. The leadership development process includes an understanding of leadership theories and principles and marketing knowledge to address the ever-changing role. Due to the complexity of the principal's role, a widespread expectation has evolved to incorporate school marketing strategies (Oplatka, 2007).

Successful professional development takes time. Principals, just like other school staff, benefit from professional development that examines best practices, provides coaching support, encourages risk-taking designed to improve student learning, cultivates team relationship, and provides quality time for reflection and renewal (Arhipova et al., 2018). A strategic management module incorporates visionary leadership that includes the need for systematic change, visionary planning utilized to build a shared vision, understanding the nature of internal and external political systems and environments, and the development of effective interactive community public relations (Arhipova et al., 2018).

Arhipova et al. (2018) have identified the following principals' competencies: jurisprudence, communication, management, education, and economics. Arhipova et al. (2018) concluded that principal training must be based on a holistic view of the school in which the organization of the program, its relationship with the local community, and knowledge of school conditions constitute the important elements (p. 73). Arhipova et al. (2018) further stated that the training must be based on a view of school leadership that will promote a working climate inspired by openness, reflection, and learning. The purpose of training is to deepen the principals' knowledge and increase their understanding of the school system.

The complexities of the principal's position in 21st-century education include an understanding of words like marketing, branding, customers, and consumers. These terms have not traditionally been appreciated at the school level, but at the end of the day, the school is a business. Adoption of school marketing is not only adding to a current position description, it is about a change in the mindset of the principal to include school marketing as a part of their leadership role.

Levine (2005) found that the majority of principal preparation programs suffer from curriculum issues, admissions that are low, and standards that are weak. Research has also showed that nationwide agreed-upon entry-level qualifications for Catholic school principals does not exist (Levine, 2005). Boyle et al. (2016) discovered that some dioceses across the United States require state principal certification, but it is unclear if the practice is applicable to all dioceses.

Previous research has indicated that it is vital for Catholic school principals to have data-informed decision-making skills (Reickhoff, 2014). The scope of principal preparation continues to change as the roles and responsibilities of Catholic school principals continue to expand and

an emphasis is placed on building enrollment, obtaining outside funding sources, supporting instruction, and being a faith leader (Reickhoff, 2014).

The advent of many school choice options has increased the need to incorporate marketing theories and strategies into the daily school activities and has changed the landscape of the expectations of the school principal. These expectations include the understanding of the important marketing connection between the school, the family, and the community (Anast-May et al., 2012). Anast-May et al. (2012) indicated that prior research has demonstrated that educational marketing is not only about learning what people want and need but also defining and delivering it. This change in expectation changes the focus of school principal leadership and management. Oplatka (2007) reported that the majority of school principals “neither hold a coherent marketing ideology and practice, nor do they employ marketing research, strategies, or plans” (p. 209). Foskett (2012) indicated that two educational leadership and management dimensions exist. The first is market behavior in the management of the school, and second, how existing management and leadership challenges are changed by the implementation of marketing strategies (Foskett, 2012). Where there is a focus on parental choice, an understanding of the management of curriculum design and development in schools has to be considered when determining marketization tactics to parents and students (Foskett, 2012). The implementation of school marketing has added a range of requirements to the skill and knowledge set which effective leaders need. In order to be successful, principals must incorporate skills of strategic marketing and the management of external relations. Foskett (2012) has determined that a lack of formal training for senior staff or head teachers in strategic and operational aspects of marketing exists. The beginning of the 21st century has brought a new perspective that educational leaders and managers need to have the skills of strategizing in marketized environments (Foskett, 2012).

Identified strategies, such as strategic and operational skills, are an essential part of the role description and person specification for principals. A principal's performance is judged with reference to institutional outcomes that are compared with similar competitive schools (Foskett, 2012).

Summary

The need to increase enrollment and development in Catholic elementary schools is imperative to their sustainability. With data showing a steady decline in enrollment over the course of five years (NCEA, 2018), school leadership is aware that something needs to be done to reverse this trend. Catholic education plays an important role in the Catholic Church and in the community.

The next chapter will outline the methodology used to determine answers to the research questions. The focus of this qualitative study of Catholic elementary schools in a diocese in Pennsylvania that educates approximately 10,000 students is to determine the level of knowledge of the school leaders and the challenges related to school marketing and the implementation framework.

Chapter 3: Research Method

As education has evolved over time, responsibilities of the principal have greatly evolved and expanded as well. With the advent of various school types, competition for students has become one aspect of these increased responsibilities of the school principal. Changes in Catholic school demographics have been documented by many researchers. A report by the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (Bransberger et al., 2016) also identified a decline in the birth rate. With the advent of many school options and a change in demographics, a need exists to develop a strong marketing strategy that includes academic excellence, affordable tuition, and the development of character in a faith-filled environment. Elementary Catholic school principals must face these challenges in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of their school.

Relationship marketing has been identified as an effective framework for the development of the diffusion of educational marketing (Kozioł et al., 2014). The transfer of this knowledge to elementary Catholic school principals and the successful diffusion of the education marketing innovation is critical to the success of the Catholic school. My goal in this investigation was to conduct a study to identify the key relationship marketing performance indicators and the diffusion of school marketing. By identifying the level of relationship marketing knowledge of the elementary Catholic school principals and the challenges they face, next steps and the development of a framework to successfully implement school marketing could occur.

This study intended to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the level of marketing knowledge of Catholic school leaders and the challenges experienced in school marketing?

RQ1a. What relationship marketing key performance indicators in the transfer of marketing knowledge occurred for the elementary Catholic school leader?

RQ2. What are the main knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing that can be used to aid the elementary Catholic school leaders to assist in the diffusion of marketing?

RQ3. What are the most significant factors that influence the diffusion of marketing in elementary Catholic schools?

The topics discussed in this chapter begin with the research design and method. Then the discussion progresses to a summary of the population and the sample. I describe the qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, the steps I took to recruit participants for this case study, the way I collected data, and my role as researcher in this process. The chapter ends with a discussion of ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Research Design and Method

In this investigation I employed a case study, qualitative research method to identify the key relationship marketing performance indicators and the diffusion of school marketing that contributed to a sustainable organization after the implementation of marketing. “Case studies are designed to suit the case and research questions” (Hyett et al., 2014, p. 1) and respond to the “how” and “why” research questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case study approach provides a framework to conduct an investigation intended to provide a deeper understanding of a particular theme, program, organization, or event that is occurring.

The intensive study of the phenomenon is a common feature of a case study. Various types of case study theories exist. However, for the purpose of this study, I utilized the instrumental case study. According to Merriam (2009), the instrumental case study mainly provides insight into an issue. It is utilized to redraw a generalization, thus, insight into an issue

or the refinement of a theory can be achieved. This approach will invoke a relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon being studied that involves narrative stories, vignettes, and thick descriptions to convey the experience and sense of being involved.

The research process for this study consisted of conducting 10 semistructured, in-depth interviews of Catholic elementary school principals who initiated school advancement in a diocese in Pennsylvania. The semistructured interview process allowed for the examination of the elementary Catholic school principals perspectives, some of whom had already instituted school advancement and some who were about to embark on the organizational change. The use of semistructured, in-depth interviews afforded the researcher the opportunity to extract a vivid picture of the participant's perspective.

When conducting in-depth interviews, the participant is considered the expert and the researcher is motivated to learn everything the participant can share on the topic being investigated. In-depth interviews are effective in evoking the participant to discuss their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences (Milena et al., 2008). By participating in in-depth interviews, the principals had the opportunity to freely answer questions, and I was able to utilize follow-up questions to seek further information or clarification. This method of research was conducive to this particular study because it is the principal's level of knowledge of marketing and the identification of the key performance indicators that influence the diffusion of marketing.

I scheduled the semistructured interviews in advance and organized them around predetermined open-ended questions. The open-ended questions may have led to other questions that emerged from the dialogue between myself and the participant. I then conducted a thematic analysis of the interviews to identify and analyze patterns. From the coded interviews, patterns and themes emerged and I discovered relationships between them. The interviews were then

process-coded and themes established. The data collected included multiple passes of process coding and researcher description of notable behaviors or comments. The in-depth interview process is a personal interaction in which open, direct verbal questions are utilized to gain a detailed narrative from the participant (DiCocco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Population

The participants in this study were Catholic elementary school principals in a diocese in Pennsylvania that educates approximately 10,000 students. The principals may hold principal certification in Pennsylvania. The participants' experience as a principal ranged from less than one year to greater than five years. The predominant gender expected was female based on the National Center for Educational Studies (NCES, 2012) research which indicates that 80% of parochial Catholic school principals are female. The participants' ages ranged from less than 45 to 55 years of age and older with an average age of 54 years old (NCES, 2012). This population of principals is appropriate for this study due to the fact that Catholic high schools and higher education have been utilizing marketing strategies for many years.

Study Sample

The representative sample consisted of 10 elementary Catholic school principals in a diocese in Pennsylvania. The diocese currently has 30 elementary schools in five Pennsylvania counties. The principals I included in the study were from schools that implemented school marketing. A request was made to the superintendent of schools to conduct the study within the diocese in Pennsylvania. After receiving permission, the potential participants were apprised of the study background and requirements by email to their school email with a request to participate. After receiving confirmation that particular elementary schools in the diocese had implemented or planned to implement school marketing, I then randomly selected participants

from these schools. Access to the participants occurred at a mutually agreed upon time as I am also an employee in the diocese.

Materials/Instruments

I asked the following open-ended, in-depth interview questions and prompts for data collection:

- The mission of Catholic schools includes faith, academics, values, and service. How do you envision school advancement, defined as enrollment management, development, and marketing, interacting with the school's values?
- What leadership role do you employ in incorporating school advancement?
- What is your definition of school marketing?
- Please describe your level of marketing knowledge through previous work experience, professional development, on-the-job training, and educational preparation. What is your perception of the amount of marketing knowledge needed in your role as the principal? Please describe how has this changed over time.
- Please describe the types of support structures that have been afforded to you or developed by you in school marketing.
- What are the main knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing that an elementary Catholic school principal can use to aid in the dispersion of marketing practices?
- Please indicate any changes in the cultural values of the faculty after the introduction of school marketing.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This research utilized the following data collection materials: interview guides/protocols, observation protocols, and interviewer hand-written notes. Field testing of the interview protocol utilized interviewing the investigator approach. The interviewing the investigator approach utilizes the researcher in the role of the study participant and enlists a colleague to conduct the interview or the researcher can play both roles (Chenail, 2011).

The in-depth interview process with thematic analysis is appropriate for this study. The core concern of this research is to gain an understanding of what school marketing preparation, if any, a principal receives in their professional training and identify key performance indicators. In-depth interviews are useful when a researcher seeks detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors or seeks to explore new issues in depth (Leavy, 2017). Interviews also provide perspective to other data, offering a more complete picture of the situation and the perspective of an individual interviewee (Leavy, 2017). The interviewer sought to identify the level of marketing knowledge of the sample group of school leaders and the challenges related to school marketing that they perceive.

The qualitative, in-depth interviews of the elementary Catholic school principals were coded utilizing in-vivo coding with multiple passes. I also made notes regarding respondent anecdotal responses. I asked follow-up questions in order to gain a better understanding of each respondent's answers to the interview questions. By utilizing this method for collecting data, detailed answers were obtained from the participant.

Researcher Role

My role was to examine and identify the key school marketing performance indicators identified by the principals. To accomplish this, I remained a neutral observer. My relationship to

each of the participants was professional in nature. I have been the advancement director at an elementary Catholic school for 10 years. Due to my experience as the advancement director, I have had first-hand experience with the challenging problem being investigated in this research. Data collected through this study gave insight into what is needed in the professional development for school principals as related to school marketing. The results assisted in identifying a framework for the successful diffusion of school marketing in elementary Catholic schools. Throughout the study, I was cognizant of the effects that personal subjectivity may have had on the data. I controlled for bias by utilizing interview protocols, considering alternative explanations to the data, and avoiding question-order and leading-question bias.

Ethical Considerations

This study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix) of Abilene Christian University prior to data collection. To protect the identity of the participants, human subject confidentiality was achieved by identifying each participant by a number. This study did not involve more than minimal risk to the participants. The data will be securely stored for three years from inactivation of the study and accessible should the IRB request access. Each participant was approached with respect and entered into the research voluntarily and with adequate information. The research did not harm the participant and sought to maximize the benefit of the data to provide long-term sustainability to elementary Catholic schools regardless of regional area or number of students.

After receiving expedited approval from the Abilene Christian University's IRB, a request was made to the superintendent of schools of the diocese in Pennsylvania for permission to request participation from diocesan principals. I recruited participants by email or letter to participate in the study and indicated that permission to conduct the research had been received.

The participants were fully informed by the use of the informed consent form that included a brief description of the research, a list of key features, outlined risks and privacy, identified who to contact for questions, and indicated withdrawal from the study may occur at any time without penalty.

Assumptions

It was assumed that an adequate response rate and participant honesty was achieved. I also assumed that the interviewees understood the questions. I addressed these assumptions by preserving anonymity, confidentiality, and the participant's ability to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion. It is also assumed that elementary Catholic schools would continue to be important to the Catholic Church and its mission. I also assumed the participants had a sincere interest in participating in the research because of their belief in the mission and success of Catholic education. This assumption was addressed through the in-depth interview process.

I also assumed that the principals' levels of marketing strategy knowledge affected the long-term sustainability of the elementary Catholic school. The existence of varying levels of principal training was also assumed. These assumptions were addressed through the literature review and the in-depth interviewing process. The in-depth interview process permitted me to follow-up with further questions to ascertain the level of knowledge and training.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the personal interpretation of each principal's role in implementing marketing strategies, and that the principals and schools were selected from the same diocese. Another limitation was the level of each principal's understanding of marketing

language. These limitations may have affected the validity of the results because of the reliance on the principal's truthfulness.

Delimitations

The concept of principal readiness, knowledge of marketing strategies, and long-term sustainability was the focus of this study. The principals were from one diocese and all were elementary Catholic school principals. This study did not include perspectives from faculty or advancement staff. This may limit the generalizability of the study as it involved only one diocese in one region of the country. This study also did not review individual school enrollment data and only involved elementary schools, not all school levels. The next step for this study would be to expand it to elementary Catholic schools in other dioceses. It would be interesting to determine if geographic location has an impact on the training that principals receive in school marketing and the effectiveness of school marketing.

Summary

In summary, my purpose in this research was to identify the elementary Catholic school principals' key relationship marketing performance indicators and school marketing diffusion. An in-depth interview process was utilized with principals who instituted school marketing in an elementary school in a diocese in Pennsylvania. Identification of the challenges principals face when diffusing school marketing assisted in developing a framework for effective marketing and long-term sustainability of the school.

The next chapter contains the results of the in-depth interview qualitative study. That chapter also includes narratives regarding the experience of the participants, researcher observations, and a coherent reconstruction of the information gathered from the participants.

The various themes that emerged are discussed and illustrate the answers to each research question.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to identify the school leaders' level of knowledge about relationship marketing and the challenges associated with school marketing. This information was needed to determine the next steps and develop a viable school marketing implementation framework in Catholic elementary schools. My analysis of the research findings also provided me with a better understanding of the impact of the transfer of knowledge and school advancement success.

The research question organizes the results of this study. In this study I sought to answer three overarching research questions. The first research question was the following: What is the level of marketing knowledge of Catholic school leaders? The second research question was the following: What are the main knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing and leadership that can be used to aid the elementary Catholic school leaders to assist in the diffusion of marketing? The third research question was the following: What are the most significant factors that influence the diffusion of marketing in elementary Catholic schools? This chapter reports two primary topics: data interpretation and the establishment of methodological integrity. The data interpretation topic includes a description of the findings' development using a conceptual framework structure and an analysis of the interview questions. Last, this chapter discusses the critical connections discovered in the study.

The participants' demographic characteristics include 10 Catholic elementary school principals in a diocese in Pennsylvania that educates approximately 10,000 students. The participants' experience level as a principal ranged from less than one year to greater than five years, with the predominant gender as female, which is consistent with the national estimate of one to five years of experience (NCES, 2012).

Level of Marketing Knowledge of Catholic School Leaders

Poole's (2017) study explored the level of marketing knowledge of Catholic school leaders and marketing effectiveness. While the author cited scholars who have explored school marketing, Poole (2017) pointed out that most of these studies focused on the level of marketing knowledge and did not identify how the knowledge was transferred. To gain insight into the principal's level of marketing knowledge, the interview questions centered on organizational values, the definition of school marketing, and a self-assessment of their knowledge level of school marketing.

School Marketing and Organizational Values

The mission of Catholic schools includes faith, academics, values, and service. The principals were asked to describe how they envision school advancement interacting with the school's values. The data analysis indicated that the principals felt that the two "go hand in hand" because their goals and school advancement were the same. This line of thinking was supported by the response of Principal 6 that "your mission is really your school."

The principals also noted that the school's mission and that marketing might not be an essential element. Another common theme was the sense that marketing happened just by the school living the mission. Principal 2 stated, "I put a lot of my energy in really trying to be faithful to the mission. I don't invest a lot in the actual marketing."

The principals saw the school marketing concept as supportive of the school's mission and described their role as an evangelizer and having a strong belief in Catholic education. "I think part of my marketing strategies encompasses all the times we are doing faith activities," reported Principal 5. "When we intertwine and talk about what we do as a Catholic institution,"

as stated by Principal 9, also highlights the importance of faith mission. The responses gathered indicated that the principals saw a value in the school's mission for sustainability.

Definition of School Marketing

The following interview question, "What is your definition of school marketing?" was meant to discover the principal's definition of school marketing's critical dimensions. The data analysis denoted that the respondents utilized examples to define school marketing by referring to the school's mission and celebrating the school's successes. These themes were described five times by four of the principals. Two principals noted that it is essential that the school advancement office understand the school's mission.

This finding suggests that the principals defined school marketing by examples or activities, not marketing terms or strategies. Examples of this were "celebrate everything, even your little successes," stated Principal 9, and "every decision I make is based on our mission statement," said Principal 2, with academic rigor, faith-based education, and increasing enrollment as the intended outcome. Principal 5 indicated that "school marketing is defined as teaching in the classroom, going to the cafeteria, greeting the students, and knowing the constituents."

Level of Marketing Knowledge

Sixty percent of the principals responded that they knew very little about marketing. "I recognize the need for it," indicated Principal 7, and having a "high desire to learn" was stated by Principal 10. Two principals said that they lacked marketing knowledge and felt that it is a fundamental concept that may be self-defined. Also revealed was a feeling of intimidation and being overwhelmed when faced with implementing school marketing. Principal 2 stated that "the

intimidation stems from the perception that other schools are excelling, and she does not have the background to accomplish the same.”

On-the-job training, previous work experience, and professional development also contributed to the principal’s level of marketing knowledge. On-the-job training was limited, and principals described continuous trial and error and something that you did not learn in “principal school,” stated Principal 9. Three principals reported they had previous work experience working in public relations, retail sales, or marketing experience. For this study, professional development opportunities are described as attending meetings and conferences that specifically target school marketing.

Ninety percent of the principals indicated the amount of marketing knowledge needed has changed over time. Principals felt that marketing has become an essential part of every aspect of Catholic elementary education. Although principals did not label it as such in the past, two principals noted that school marketing has been occurring since the inception of Catholic school. Principal 3 stated that “pressure exists on Catholic school leaders to have greater marketing abilities.” A sense of frustration regarding implementing and continuing school marketing was evident during the interviews yet understanding that school marketing is an integral part of a school’s long-term sustainability. During the interviews, participants described the change in the amount of marketing knowledge needed as the principal.

Principal 3 mentioned several changes associated with school marketing, including noticing that “more time is spent dealing with marketing issues.” Several other participants agreed, describing the change as “key,” “pressure,” “emotional valleys,” and “emotional.” In contrast, others described the level of marketing knowledge was “forefront” and “important” to the principal’s role.

The semistructured, in-depth interviews indicated that the level of marketing knowledge is minimal for the majority of the Catholic school leaders. The findings of this study suggest that although a level of marketing knowledge exists, it has limited effectiveness. The principals also described marketing knowledge in terms of activities, not technical marketing concepts. This finding is consistent with previous work done by Sferle et al. (2012).

Main Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Related to Marketing and Leadership

The main knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing and leadership are important to define and can be used to aid the elementary Catholic school leaders to assist in the diffusion of marketing. Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown's (2003) study indicated that most prior school marketing research is centered on market structures and implications for teaching and learning. The researchers also indicated that successful implementation of school marketing strategies requires a principal to have related knowledge and skills. This section probes the principal's leadership style, marketing related support structures, and identification of the knowledge, skills, and abilities a principal needs in order to effectively implement school marketing.

Principal Leadership Style

The effective implementation of school marketing involves leadership and having an understanding of the organization. Utilizing an effective leadership style to institute school marketing is critical to its successful diffusion. The leadership style employed by principals may be reflective of their thoughts about mission and their professional background. Overall, the data analysis indicated that the principals felt their leadership style was to lead by example and build relationships with the parents, staff, faculty, and students. Principal 9's response illustrated that building relationships meant demonstrating to others the value of the school, "I am a very hands-

on principal. There's a lot of positive out there by showing who you are." "So, I think it is really important to lead by example and to get them excited about marketing," stated Principal 5.

Collaboration and relationship building were also leadership characteristics indicated by the participants. Principal 4 described a leadership scenario in this way: "Usually, we talk about it, and everybody decides whether they're going to buy into the event or whatever it is." Principal 6 also supported this style by responding that "the answer is the collection of answers from multiple inputs."

The concept of relationship-building was also evidenced by respondent comments. "It's all about relationships. Building upon that strong sense of community values and relationships and really know each other," stated Principal 8. The "principle of being well-known in the community," said Principal 1. Further analysis of the responses demonstrated the principal's understanding of the need to work with current families, modeling care and concern, and demonstrating commitment to the school as other components of building relationships with school constituents.

Principal 10 introduced their description of transformational leadership as a leadership style: "I'm trying really hard to keep up with what's what, what's going on, and ways to do things." This reference to transformational leadership speaks to the transformation factors of innovative ways to situations and active listening, as identified by Boga and Ensari (2009).

Support Structures

When describing the types of support structures afforded to the principals to effectively market their school, the principals indicated three main areas: an advancement director, the diocesan office of education, and the pastor. Other marketing support structures included word of

mouth, the formation of a marketing committee, social media use, and personal, professional development.

The principals who had an advancement director on staff felt that the advancement director position dovetails with their school values. They saw the concept as supportive of the school's mission and described the person as an evangelizer who strongly believed in Catholic education. Principal 9 commented that "a lot of the marketing is my advancement director doing the work." The principals also acknowledged that they were responsible for those tasks without an advancement director and can't do it all.

Four principals indicated that diocesan workshops were helpful. Four principals also viewed the addition of a marketing director at the diocesan office positively and a place to go for support. Principal 4 stated that the office of education "has been doing a lot of meetings with marketing," and Principal 6 "offers meetings for principals and advancement directors." Principal 3 indicated that the "pastor is very supportive" and Principal 6 stated that a supportive "parish community from finance to the support of pastors" is critical to school marketing. An interesting finding was that Principal 4 stated that "there really isn't much parish support."

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Identification of the school leaders' level of marketing knowledge is critical to elementary Catholic schools' sustainability. The following interview question sought to identify the level of marketing knowledge of the sample group of school leaders: "What are the main knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing that an elementary Catholic school principal can use to aid in the dispersion of marketing practices." The data analysis resulted in common themes rooted in activities without a reference to marketing theory.

Based on the data, the main knowledge set was described as technology, knowing your community, fostering a positive school community, and economically and effectively marketing a Catholic school. Principal 7 said, “Knowing your audience,” and Principals 2 and 4 indicated that “knowing your community” as the knowledge most useful in the dispersion of marketing practices. Principal 6 offered further insight stating that “principals need to know how school parents are engaging in the school and parish environment and the impact to the community.”

Further data analysis revealed the main skills needed for principals centered around being consistent, using strong verbal and written communication, understanding faculty who do not see the importance of sustaining enrollment, having a facility with social media and an ability to talk with people, and understanding customer service. “If you’re going to be good at it, you really have to be a person who is not afraid to have a conversation,” stated Principal 7.

Abilities identified by the participants include being able to multitask, think on your feet, and try new things before giving up. Principal 3 spoke about “being energetic about the school’s marketing plan.” Principal 7 noted that “the ability to work with other people and to be able to call on those people that have knowledge that is deeper and stronger in different areas” is critical.

As evidenced by the participant responses, the principals in this study fostered dialogue and learning related to school marketing for themselves and other school community members. The main knowledge, skills, and abilities identified included knowing your community, strong verbal and written communication skills, and the ability to multitask to effect positive marketing. Similarities among the 10 principals included using technology to facilitate effective communication, access to experts in the field, and a school community that embraces the concept that everyone assists in marketing.

Significant Factors That Influence the Diffusion of Marketing

Gouws and Rheede van Oudtshoorn's (2011) research found that diffusion of an innovation is concerned with the noneconomic factors that influence someone to make a decision. The participants in this study were asked to describe the change in faculty cultural values, identify challenges in the implementation of marketing, and any influence from internal or external factors. This section identifies the participants descriptions of the significant factors that influenced the diffusion of marketing.

Change in Faculty Cultural Values

Culture consists of the shared values and behaviors that bind a community together in search of meaning (Cook, 1998). When asked to indicate any changes in the faculty's cultural values after introducing school marketing, most principals commented that the changing cultural values included a greater sense of community, a focus on mission, and that marketing is a part of their role. Principal 5 stated that "the school staff love their jobs and feel validated by the marketing work done." "A little bit more professional and more positive" is a description provided by Principal 9 when referring to a change in cultural values.

The data analysis also noted a report of resistance to a change of cultural values. Some faculty members felt they did not need to participate in marketing. "The change is for them to understand that marketing isn't just going to be the advancement director," stated Principal 7. It is important to note that the principals felt the school staff needs to understand that marketing and development are critical to their job and long-term sustainability. "Everybody has to sell the school. It's that important," stated Principal 3.

Challenges in Implementing School Marketing

An analysis of the data generated in the highlights of the individual interviews showed that principals rated three factors as critical challenges to their ability to implement school marketing: communication pathways, lack of marketing funding, and the onboarding and socialization of personnel to a new business model. The following sections elaborate on the data gained relating to each of these factors to provide insight into the challenges influencing principals' ability to implement school marketing campaigns.

Communication. The principals consistently indicated that communication is the key to successful marketing. Frustration with determining effective communication avenues was also evident. Principal 9 stated that “the most frustrating thing is when you try to use every avenue possible to communicate, and the school community appears to be unaware of the communication.” Consistent communication is essential to “getting everyone on board and promoting a unified approach,” avowed Principal 8.

Funding. Five principals noted that school marketing funding was lacking or nonexistent and was the biggest issue they faced. Principal 9 stated that “a school is a business” and was concerned about the change in organizational culture but realized that “marketing is necessary for sustainability.” The interviewer noted frustration with this aspect. “Marketing is definitely something the school lacks. We lack the funds for marketing, so that’s always been a bigger issue,” stated Principal 10. The principals acknowledged that marketing is essential and wanted to positively implement the strategies; however, the lack of funding precluded them from successful implementation. The participants described their frustration, including the emotions associated with not being able to finance the task and its affective and practical implications.

Principal 10 mentioned several times a lack of funding and its impact on school marketing, including that “marketing is definitely something the school lacks . . . we lack the funds for marketing, so that’s the bigger issue . . . the financial piece.” Funding is an internal factor that influences the implementation of school marketing.

Achieving buy-in for the implementation of school marketing from the teachers and staff was also seen as a challenge. The teachers, staff, and in one instance, the principal, were being asked to work in a business model that is unfamiliar to them. Principal 4’s statement evidences this: “You’re dealing with people who’ve never dealt with any kind of marketing or business before, including me, the principal.” This unfamiliarity leads to resistance and difficulty in achieving a unified approach and a change in organizational culture.

Influence of Internal or External Factors

The main internal factors that influence the implementation of school marketing are the acceptance and belief that marketing is essential and understanding its impact on enrollment and the school’s budget. Principal 7 supported this assertion, stating that successful implementation is only possible when the principal has “the ability . . . to convince the pastor and the school board, as well as the teachers and external people that marketing is effective.” The culture in a Catholic elementary school makes it difficult for faculty and staff to understand that everyone participates in school marketing. Principals also suggested that marketing may not receive the attention that is needed daily because of other responsibilities. “Marketing may not get the attention because obviously, you have other things to do during the day,” stated Principal 1. Principal 2 has seen a “positive outcome from the faculty by showing gratitude and appreciation.” This action positively reinforces the intended behavior change that everyone in the

school is responsible for effective marketing. The action also influences the organizational culture change to embrace marketing.

External factors that affect school marketing include societal pressures, generational differences, and technology. The increased use of technology and social media affects school marketing by challenging the school to find the monies and expertise to market in the digital arena. “Our society is more of an app-based phone society. Therefore, we are looking for more streaming services in terms of marketing in the digital field,” purported Principal 6. The societal pressures of practicing an organized religion and seeing the value of a Catholic education also affect school marketing efforts. “Societal pressures and the lack of Church attendance indicates fewer people supporting the Church and not seeing the importance of Catholic education,” suggested Principal 7. This was a common concern among those interviewed and was seen as having long-term effects on enrollment.

Engaging Constituents

The data analysis showed that common themes for engaging constituents include communication, special events, surveys, and volunteering. The respondents described communication as causal conversation, social media, electronic, and paper. The utilization of various forms of communication ensures that the constituents are engaged with the school. Engaging constituents involves a “multiprong plan that includes trust and word of mouth marketing,” Principal 7 indicated. “We use a lot of surveys,” stated Principal 9. Surveying the various constituent groups has proved to provide relevant information to improve school operations and academics. Constituent engagement has had an overwhelmingly positive response from the principals. Building relationships with multiple constituents creates a positive

environment that promotes the mission of the school. School families are viewed as the best advertisers and recruiters for the school.

Special events are essential to building relationships with all constituents. The principals described various types of special events. These events included inviting community members to the school, participation in outreach programs, and faculty involvement in marketing. “Like a lot of our business partners, we invite someone from their company to visit the school to involve the community,” stated Principal 1. “This is really important because you’re building a relationship with not just the kids, but with the families,” Principal 5. “Show them what our school is about and build community relationships,” stressed Principal 6.

A successful event requires volunteers. By engaging volunteers, the school community values and mission are reinforced. This positive interaction provides an opportunity for word-of-mouth marketing to occur. Principal 6 concluded that “bringing volunteers into our school and letting them see all the great things we do” develops a positive environment.

Summary

The most significant factors that influence the diffusion of marketing were revealed throughout the study and include communication, funding, and a change in cultural values. These factors were evident in each interview question. The interview questions identified three critical factors without a particular order or hierarchy of importance. The findings of this study suggest that a lack in the transfer of marketing knowledge, the lack of financial support, and the continuous effort to affect a positive culture change significantly impact the successful implementation of school marketing.

All of the critical factors are indicators of common influences for the principals that affect creating a school culture conducive to change and building external support so that

dialogue and learning related to school marketing could occur. Although each of the principals had their own leadership style and approach, they demonstrated their belief in the mission of Catholic school and their desire to achieve long-term sustainability.

I transcribed and coded the interview data, which generated prominent themes in the data. Chapter 4 presents these themes and associated examples from each of the research interviews. Chapter 5 analyzes the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to identify the key indicators of the performance of relationship marketing and the diffusion of school marketing that contribute to a sustainable organization after the implementation of marketing and culture change in Catholic elementary schools. This information is essential to identify the next steps and develop a framework for school marketing implementation. The case study qualitative method consisted of 10 in-depth interviews of Catholic elementary school principals in a diocese in Pennsylvania. I coded the interviews using thematic analysis and process coding. The study's limitations include my personal interpretation of each principal's role, all respondents were from the same diocese, and the level of each principal's understanding of marketing language. This chapter analyzes the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature

This case study researched 10 elementary Catholic school principals in a diocese in Pennsylvania to discover the key relationship marketing performance indicators and school marketing diffusion to ensure long-term sustainability. The 10 principals brought different perspectives and varied length of employment as a principal. Exploring these 10 school leaders' responses provided insight into the level of marketing knowledge and the challenges experienced in implementing school marketing. In addition to the typical difficulties of leadership required of all principals, Catholic school principals have the added challenge of promoting the school's Catholic identity and leading a faith community as well as provision of a challenging academic learning environment.

According to Poole (2017), a relationship between the principals' marketing knowledge and marketing effectiveness in schools exists. However, what is unknown is the key relationship

marketing indicators in the transfer of marketing knowledge to Catholic elementary school leaders and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to assist in the diffusion of marketing. By researching and understanding the lived experiences of Catholic school principals, this study was able to identify the level of marketing knowledge and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to assist in the diffusion of marketing for long-term sustainability.

This study's research can assist other Catholic school leaders and serve as a model of best practices for other Catholic schools. Identifying the skills needed can inspire other Catholic school leaders, such as superintendents, to examine how they facilitate marketing and promote and empower their staff and other stakeholders to become involved in the school marketing process. As a result of the data collected, leadership strategies and skills emerged that could help educational leaders develop and implement school marketing initiatives at other schools.

This categories of this study's literature review include school marketing, principal preparedness, and leadership and change theories. A review of the existing research and literature found a relationship between the marketing knowledge of school leaders and marketing effectiveness in schools (Poole, 2017). Discovering the transfer of marketing knowledge and the identification of critical success factors in Catholic elementary schools is limited in prior research.

From a synthesis of the literature related to organizational change, Rogers (2003) developed the diffusion of innovation change theory that defines four elements: innovation, communication channels, time, and social system. This framework provides an organizational change theory of adoption and provided the elements by which I interpreted the study data. This framework's utilization as a diagnostic tool may indicate why innovation has limited diffusion or is effective. As the primary change agents, principals implement school marketing to improve

the school's long-term sustainability while focusing on academics. Interpreting the study data through this framework allowed me to identify the transfer of marketing knowledge to principals and challenges associated with the implementation of marketing.

The diffusion of innovation framework applies to high-involvement products and market branding (Gouws & Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2011) and is applicable to school marketing due to the constant interaction with the various constituent groups that make up the school organization. The research found that effective diffusion is primarily concerned with the noneconomic factors that influence individual decisions (Gouws & Rheede van Oudtshoorn, 2011). In addition to the four main elements, the following five steps are also included in the innovation-decision process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Rogers, 2003). The framework also includes adopter categories defined as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers, 2003). Building support through the framework asserts the focus on the change agent and their ability to establish partnerships with adopters. These partnerships create, support, and sustain change and lead to the successful adoption of innovation. This framework provides a framework for the change agent, the principal, to successfully implement marketing.

There is no single leadership theory or one perfect leadership style that is effective in every situation, but there are different effective styles in various situations. When faced with organizational change, the behaviors of the transformational leader can positively influence reactions to change. Transformation leadership is demonstrated in the data by the principal's indication that the school's mission is of the highest priority and is the cornerstone of marketing, which fosters an environment with clear standards. The data also suggest that principals understand the need to change the organizational culture to include a mindset of working for the

common good and emphasize that everyone has a role in marketing. Boga and Ensari's (2009) research support this as their findings indicate that transformational leadership predicts the perception of organizational success.

Catholic schools' mission includes faith, academics, values, and service and is expressed daily through experiences and interactions between all constituents. The mission permeates the spirit and culture of each school. School staff who identify with the school's mission and believe that the principal supports the school's mission maintain a positive relationship and are more likely to advance all aspects of the school (Hobbie, 2009).

Prior research has indicated that school marketing is a critical component to the long-term sustainability of Catholic schools. In addition to school leaders' daily challenges, Catholic school leaders also need to embrace the mission and lead their faith community. The number of students enrolled in Catholic school elementary schools has declined in the United States from 2.01 million in 2000 to 1.2 million in 2019 (NCEA, 2019). Catholic elementary schools have traditionally served lower- and middle-income families (Murnane et al., 2018).

This case study used qualitative data collection strategies to examine the key relationship marketing performance indicators and the diffusion of school marketing that contributes to a sustainable organization after the implementation of marketing. Qualitative data collected through semistructured, in-depth interviews demonstrated that the level of marketing knowledge was general, and the implementation challenges were significant. It became evident to me that the perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing correlated to internal and external factors.

Summary of the Study

This study's findings identify the key relationship performance indicators in the transfer of marketing knowledge and the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing that can aid in its diffusion. The transformational leader focuses on broadening and elevating the interests of and motivating followers to sustain continuous improvement. Inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration demonstrate the principal's supportive culture and active listening skills (Boga & Ensari, 2009). According to Rogers (2003), by laying this foundation through the establishment of structures and practices, the organization's culture shifts, and the organization adopts the change.

The findings also indicated the importance of the knowledge phase of the diffusion framework. This key stage in the innovation-decision period of the adoption process is the time from when the principals have knowledge of the innovation of school marketing until adoption. The three types of knowledge are awareness-knowledge, how-to knowledge, and principles-knowledge (Rogers, 2003). According to Rogers (2003), an individual can only be persuaded to adopt the innovation when having sufficient knowledge. The principals clearly indicated that they understood the need to implement school marketing. However, the how-to knowledge, or the knowledge necessary to use an innovation properly, was lacking and affected the diffusion process.

Research Questions

The first research question was the following: What is the level of marketing knowledge of Catholic school leaders and the challenges experienced in school marketing? Using semistructured, in-depth interviews, I interviewed 10 Catholic elementary school principals to identify the level of marketing knowledge and the challenges they experienced in school

marketing. Marketing knowledge is described as a combination of an understanding of general marketing principles and applying these principles in the organization (Poole, 2017). Koziol et al.'s (2014) research indicated that relationship marketing is essential to developing and disseminating educational marketing innovation. The results of the present study indicated that the level of marketing knowledge was marginal. The principals responded with "none," "I can't say I'm an expert," and "I haven't taken any formal professional development." However, all participants indicated a high desire to gain additional marketing knowledge and expertise. The principals expressed that on-the-job-training and professional development have aided in the development of their marketing knowledge.

The main challenges described include effective communication and funding. Principal 4 noted that "you're dealing with people who've never dealt with any kind of marketing or business before, including me, the principal." The principals expressed frustration with the lack of marketing funding, yet the expectation to market still exists. Effective communication was a challenge due to the many available communication avenues, such as print, social media, the Internet, and applications. The principals commented that no one type of communication reaches all constituents.

This study's findings and data support the following significant conclusions concerning elementary Catholic school principals as marketing agents: a commitment exists to increase marketing knowledge and the challenges faced are not limited to the principal's role. As found in the literature, marketing knowledge is a combination of an understanding of general marketing principles and applying these principles in the organization (Poole, 2017). The organizational change that occurs when implementing marketing affects how school leaders view the students, the families, the staff, and the supporting organizational role of principals as frontline marketing

agents. Some embrace the concept, while others do not understand the need for change or refuse to change. However, the desired consequence of increasing enrollment involves all stakeholders.

The research results indicated that principals acknowledge the importance of marketing knowledge. The results also indicated that the concept is viewed as supportive of the school's mission; however, these principals possessed limited marketing knowledge. The principal's commitment to increasing their marketing knowledge was evident in the responses to the research questions. Although some have attended professional development sessions related to marketing, all indicated the desire to learn more through additional professional development opportunities.

As stated in Chapter 2, Catholic school principals promote the Catholic identity of their school and its academic successes, as they are the primary change agents. Preparing for the role as the primary change agent when instituting school marketing can be challenging. According to the data gathered from the participants in this study, marketing the school's mission, including faith, academics, values, and service, was integral to the success of the school and the most significant challenge was financing marketing efforts.

Each principal in this study demonstrated a passion and commitment to the mission of Catholic education. Feeling defeated was not indicated by the principals when discussing the identified challenges and the acknowledged impact of school marketing. It was evident that the principals' commitment to the mission guided their actions and has inspired them to find resolutions to their challenges.

The second research question was the following: What are the main knowledge, skills, and abilities related to marketing that can aid the elementary Catholic school leaders in the diffusion of marketing? The elementary Catholic school leader's knowledge, skills, and abilities

related to marketing were identified throughout this study and specifically in their responses to this interview question. The principals indicated the knowledge they needed centered around knowing the school community's constituents and how to engage them in school marketing effectively. Practices included making people feel a part of something and effectively targeting the group.

Each principal shared their perspective on the skills needed to diffuse school marketing effectively. The most necessary skills indicated by the research participants were written and verbal communication skills. The participant's responses aligned with the diffusion of innovation models, the four main elements of innovation, communication channels, time, and social system (Rogers, 2003). This is evidenced by the principal's desire to implement marketing, provide effective communication, spend time promoting the mission, and engage the various constituents.

The in-depth interviews indicated that the identified abilities to implement marketing were to keep trying, to call on people who have more in-depth, robust knowledge in different areas, to be able to multitask, and to be energetic about the marketing plan. Additional identified abilities were to provide encouragement to others to reflect upon and discuss the vision of the school. Also indicated was that vision clarification does occur with consistent communication with staff, students, and parents. The consistent communication reminds the constituent groups of their commitment to the vision, which is everyone's work.

The results also indicated that each principal's most important strength is their focus on mission and the desire to achieve the long-term sustainability of their school. This culture of high expectations created by the principals led to a belief that remaining complacent was not acceptable and could change. The principals were willing to challenge existing practices;

however, the challenge of funding and staff buy-in were limiting factors. Each principal indicated the desire to attend professional development. Stachowski's (2011) research supports these findings and found that the benefits of school marketing include a better accomplishment of the institutions' mission; increased satisfaction of employees and students, the ability to attract more financial and nonfinancial resources, and increased efficiency of marketing actions.

A hallmark of transformation leadership is to foster an ethical work environment with clear values, priorities, and standards. The principals signified this by fostering a commitment to Catholic identity. Data collected throughout the study strongly support the importance of a school leader's engagement in the organization. Another finding that emerged was fostering dialogue and a learning culture, which indicates various constituents a desire to work collaboratively.

The third research question was the following: What are the most significant factors influencing the diffusion of marketing in elementary Catholic schools? The most significant factors influencing the diffusion of marketing identified in this study include a change in the cultural values of the faculty, communication, funding, acceptance of marketing implementation, increased use of technology, and societal pressures. The participants especially noted frustration with effective communication and the lack of funding for marketing.

This research question helped me determine the need for improvement in the adoption of the cultural change that occurs with the implementation of school marketing. When asked if there was any particular need for the cultural change to be improved and how to improve it, the principals mostly replied that the current culture needed improvement in terms of the implementation of marketing. There was an agreement among all principals concerning the need

to improve the marketing for Catholic schools and the use of more marketing principles to achieve long-term sustainability.

Based on this study's finding, each Catholic school principal described different leadership styles, and *leading by example* was the predominant style. Another theme that emerged is that external support that provides resources to support the change effort are needed. Allocating these resources would allow school community members, specifically staff, an opportunity to implement marketing. Another important outcome was the steps taken to create an environment with a commitment to school vision and change, given limited resources.

Before conducting this study, it was unknown what transfer of knowledge occurred with principals in this study. Based on this study's findings, the significant factors that influence the diffusion of marketing in elementary Catholic schools are the lack of funding, professional development in marketing tactics, and a lack of marketing knowledge.

Limitations

There were several limitations inherent in this study. One of the limitations of this study included the personal interpretation of each principal's role in implementing marketing strategies. A second limitation of the study was that all of the research participants were from the same diocese, which may have diminished the ability to generalize the findings to other settings. Another limitation was the research participants' limited understanding of marketing terminology, which may have impacted their understanding of the interview questions and their ability to describe or articulate challenges. These limitations may affect the validity of the results because of the reliance on the principal's truthfulness.

To help ensure transferability and dependability, each research participant received a full description of the research study before the interview. This description included the data

collection method, in-depth interviews conducted via video conference, and the study context. The study's context included the desire to identify a Catholic elementary school leaders' knowledge of marketing skills and abilities and the diffusion of that knowledge to mitigate enrollment decline.

This study utilized informed consent procedures and standardized interview protocols to establish credibility. Each research participant received an invitation to participate in the study and an informed consent document. The informed consent included the purpose and description, the risks and benefits, and the privacy and confidentiality related to this study. The researcher utilized standardized interview protocols with each participant. The interview protocol included an introduction, study purpose, study procedures, and interview questions.

Recommendations for Practical Applications

Pursuant to the analysis of the data, the recommendations for practical purposes include professional development for principals in the area of relationship marketing, analysis of the school budget or outside sources in order to allocate funds for school marketing, and a marketing plan framework to assist in the diffusion of school marketing. Another recommendation encompasses hiring for the needed competencies related to school marketing. These competencies include marketing knowledge, awareness of organizational change, and effective verbal and written communication skills.

As the primary change agents, principals charged with implementing marketing benefit from support structures, such as professional development, advancement directors, and marketing budgets. Professional development would assist the principal in identifying the culture of their school, provide ways to manage the current culture, and guide the change in culture. The

positive change in culture would further promote Catholic schools and assist the diocese in marketing efforts.

The findings from this study can provide a source of guidance for practicing Catholic school principals and provide a framework for their initial and continuing professional development. Professional development training programs should highlight the critical skills necessary for effective marketing, market research and analysis of the environment, the formulation of a marketing plan and strategy followed by implementation of the marketing mix, and an evaluation of the marketing process (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2003). This should be available at the diocesan level to facilitate knowledge gathering and develop effective marketing skills needed to successfully engage marketing. The specific competencies needed include expanding the knowledge of school marketing and how to employ it, which includes effective communication and developing staff member adoption. This is the beginning of a marketing framework that also includes building an organizational culture that embraces marketing at every level and ensures that financial support is received at the school and diocesan level.

The critical skills identified in this study include the principal's ability to develop and implement a marketing plan that includes relationship marketing, fiscal responsibility, and a leadership style that promotes a positive change in culture. A support structure, which would provide resources to address marketing needs, such as additional personnel, tools, and education, is also needed. The support structure would encompass various organizational levels—diocese, parish, and school—with each providing the necessary insight and direction needed to achieve the goal of long-term sustainability.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research should include expanding the study to include Catholic elementary schools in other dioceses. Additional research on the geographical location's impact on the principal's marketing preparation may provide insight into Catholic schools' viability. As the elementary Catholic school advancement director position becomes a part of more schools, research around the impact of the position and organizational culture change will enhance the research literature. If the school cannot support the advancement director position, the research should expand to explain how the diocese supports change in marketing culture. Another area for future research is to investigate the successful principal related to the critical dimension of leadership in facilitating change.

Conclusions

The Catholic elementary school principal's knowledge of school marketing is critical to elementary Catholic schools' sustainability. With a better understanding of relationship marketing and the effects of school marketing diffusion, principals can manage the successful implementation of school marketing. The diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003) provides a framework to manage a change in organizational culture.

As a result of this research, the findings suggest that the practice of school marketing will provide greater awareness of Catholic schools. However, without providing professional development to principals in marketing, principals will continue to view marketing activities and miss valuable opportunities to share the good news of the school's mission. This research can help the diocese seek Catholic school leaders who possess the main knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for effective school marketing.

Perhaps the most significant findings of this study were the passion with which the principals described the school's mission, their zeal to share the schools' successes and challenges, and the desire for professional development in marketing. Focusing solely on these findings will not be enough. The findings imply that Catholic elementary school principals will not be nearly as effective in creating sustained change to ensure long-term sustainability without the support and an understanding of how to apply marketing strategies to help achieve educational goals.

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Appendix: IRB Approval

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103

325-674-2885



July 23, 2020

Lisa Geosits
Department of Organizational Leadership
Abilene Christian University

Dear Lisa,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Catholic Elementary School Principals, the Transfer of Marketing Knowledge, and the Diffusion of School Marketing",

(IRB# 20-097) is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs